



**Behaviour of Soft Soil Improved with Vertical Drain
Accelerated Preloading Incorporating Visco-Plastic
Deformation**

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by

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CERTIFICATION

I, Babak Azari, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Technology, Sydney, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

Babak Azari

May 2015

*I would like to dedicate my
thesis to my beloved parents*

ABSTRACT

Creep also known as time dependant viscous behaviour of soil is a significant part of the soft soil settlement, which may cause substantial deformation in the long-term. Post-construction settlement of soft soils can be significant throughout the life time of the structure. Consequently, to minimise the post-construction deformation and improve the bearing capacity and the shear strength of the soft soil deposits, preloading combined with vertical drains is frequently used as a ground improvement technique.

Soil disturbance induced by the installation of vertical drains results in reducing the horizontal soil permeability and the shear strength in the disturbed zone. Thus, the soil disturbance contributes to the reduced hydraulic conductivity and overconsolidation ratio (OCR) of the soil in the vicinity of drains, influencing soil deformation. Based on the available literature, there is a lack of understanding with respect to the combined effects of the overconsolidation ratio and the hydraulic conductivity profiles in disturbed zone and the nonlinear visco-plastic behaviour of soft soils. These combined effects influence the creep parameters and the settlement rate and accordingly deformation of soft soils improved using vertical drains assisted preloading.

In this research, the elastic visco-plastic model has been incorporated in the consolidation equation to investigate the effects of soil disturbance induced by the installation of vertical drains on the long term performance of soft soil deposits. The elastic visco-plastic model consists of a nonlinear creep function with a creep strain limit. The applied elastic visco-plastic model is based on the framework of the modified Cam-Clay model, capturing the soil creep during the excess pore water pressure dissipation. Finite difference formulations for fully coupled one dimensional axisymmetric consolidation have been adopted to model the time dependent behaviour of the soft soil, combining both vertical and radial drainage. Crank-Nicholson scheme is applied in formulating the finite difference procedure, since this scheme uses two steps in partial differentials of pore water pressure over distance, stabilising the process quicker.

An array of laboratory tests were carried out using Oedometer and small and large Rowe cells apparatus to verify the developed numerical code for the axisymmetric solution. The Oedometer tests were conducted to choose the soil mixtures for disturbed and intact zones. Two sets of small Rowe cell tests were carried out on selected soil mixes to obtain the elastic visco-plastic model parameters. A large Rowe cell was used to carry out the vertical drain assisted consolidation tests by installing a vertical drain in the centre of the cell. To simulate the disturbed zone for the area surrounding the vertical drain, a different mix with reduced permeability was used. A compacted sand column covered with flexible porous geotextile was installed in the centre to simulate the vertical drain. The cell is fully instrumented and consists of a vertical displacement gauge at the surface level and nine pore water pressure transducers on the sides and at the base of the cell. Comparison of laboratory measurements and numerical predictions shows that the proposed finite difference procedure incorporating the elastic visco-plastic soil behaviour is appropriate for the consolidation analysis of preloading with vertical drains.

Two case studies of vertical drains assisted preloading were numerically simulated to investigate the effects of soil disturbance caused by the installation of vertical drains. Different variations of the overconsolidation ratio and hydraulic conductivity in the disturbed zone in combination with time dependant behaviour of soft soils were considered. Different OCR and initial hydraulic conductivity profiles in the disturbed and transition zones result in various visco-plastic strain rates and creep strain limits. Consequently, the induced changes in visco-plastic strain rate and creep strain limit influence the settlement rate at any given time. Therefore, the selection of OCR and initial hydraulic conductivity profile in the disturbed zone has a significant effect on selecting unloading time and therefore the post construction settlement. It was observed that the creep coefficient and the creep strain limit vary during loading and unloading and also during excess pore water pressure dissipation. The creep coefficient and the creep strain limit are functions of the vertical effective stress and time. The proposed solution can readily be used by practicing engineers considering layered soil deposits, time dependent loading and unloading, while incorporating combined effects of soil disturbance and visco-plastic behaviour.

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PUBLICATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRACT	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	V
PUBLICATIONS	VI
TABLE OF CONTENT	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	X
LIST OF TABLES	XVI
LIST OF SYMBOLS.....	XVII
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 GENERAL	1
1.2 CLAY COMPRESSION.....	2
1.2.1 Preloading and vertical drains	3
1.3 HYPOTHESES TO ESTIMATE SOIL CREEP.....	5
1.4 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE PRESENT STUDY	6
1.5 ORGANISATION OF DISSERTATION.....	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 GENERAL.....	9
2.2 MECHANISMS OF CREEP DEFORMATION	11
2.2.1 The breakdown of interparticle bonds	11
2.2.2 Jumping bonds.....	12
2.2.3 Sliding between particles.....	12
2.2.4 Double porosity	12
2.2.5 Structural viscosity.....	13
2.3 HYPOTHESIS A.....	13
2.3.1 Creep ratio concept.....	14
2.3.1.1 Primary consolidation	14
2.3.1.2 Secondary compression	16
2.3.1.3 Deformation prediction of clays.....	17
2.3.1.4 Reduction of secondary compression using surcharge	25
2.4 HYPOTHESIS B.....	34
2.4.1 Empirical models.....	35
2.4.1.1 Taylor and Merchant's model	35
2.4.1.2 Suklje's model	38

2.4.1.3	Bjerrum's model.....	39
2.4.1.4	Garlanger's model.....	42
2.4.1.5	Kabbaj's model.....	45
2.4.1.6	Yin's model.....	47
2.4.2	Rheological models.....	48
2.4.2.1	Gibson and Lo's model.....	49
2.4.2.2	Wahls' model.....	50
2.4.2.3	Barden's model.....	51
2.4.2.4	Aboshi's model.....	53
2.4.2.5	Rajot's model.....	54
2.4.3	General stress-strain-time models.....	56
2.4.3.1	Overstress theory.....	56
2.4.3.2	Non-stationary flow surface theory.....	58
2.5	PRELOADING WITH VERTICAL DRAINS.....	61
2.5.1	Vertical drains assisted preloading.....	61
2.5.2	Vacuum preloading with membrane.....	64
2.5.3	Membraneless vacuum preloading.....	65
2.6	SOIL DISTURBANCE INDUCED WHILE INSTALLING VERTICAL DRAINS.....	66
2.7	ANALYTICAL FORMULATION FOR VERTICAL DRAIN ASSISTED PRELOADING.....	68
2.8	NUMERICAL SIMULATION OF VERTICAL DRAIN ASSISTED PRELOADING.....	79
2.9	SUMMARY.....	83
3	FINITE DIFFERENCE SOLUTION FOR 2D AXISYMMETRIC CONSOLIDATION EQUATION CONSIDERING NONLINEAR ELASTIC VISCO-PLASTIC MODEL	86
3.1	GENERAL.....	86
3.2	NONLINEAR ELASTIC VISCO-PLASTIC BEHAVIOUR OF SOILS.....	87
3.3	FINITE DIFFERENCE SOLUTION FOR AXISYMMETRIC CONSOLIDATION EQUATION.....	92
3.3.1	Solution to general parabolic differential equations.....	92
3.3.2	Axisymmetric consolidation equations.....	97
3.4	DEVELOPING A CODE INCORPORATING CREEP MODEL.....	102
3.5	CAPABILITIES OF THE DEVELOPED FINITE DIFFERENCE SOLUTION.....	104
3.6	SUMMARY.....	105
4	LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS AND VERIFICATION OF THE NUMERICAL SOLUTION	106
4.1	GENERAL.....	106
4.2	TESTING APPARATUS AND EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE.....	107
4.2.1	Large Rowe Cell Apparatus.....	107
4.2.2	Material Properties.....	112
4.2.2.1	Soil samples.....	112
4.2.2.2	Consolidation tests on reconstituted samples.....	114

4.2.2.1	Small Rowe cell tests on reconstituted samples	119
4.2.3	Preparation of large Rowe cell and initial sample	137
4.3	PRE-CONSOLIDATION PROCESS AND PREPARATION OF THE FINAL SAMPLE W	139
4.3.1	Initial drainage and de-airing of the Rowe cell system.....	142
4.3.2	Vertical drain assisted consolidation test procedure	144
4.4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	145
4.5	SUMMARY	164
5	EFFECTS OF SOIL DISTURBANCE DUE TO PVD INSTALLATION ON LONG TERM GROUND BEHAVIOUR.....	166
5.1	GENERAL.....	166
5.2	VÄSBY TEST FILL CASE STUDY	167
5.2.1	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	174
5.3	SKÅ-EDEBY TEST FILL CASE STUDY	184
5.3.1	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	194
5.4	SUMMARY	204
6	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	207
6.1	SUMMARY	207
6.2	CONCLUSIONS	208
6.3	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	212
	REFERENCES.....	214
	APPENDIX A	229

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.2. Typical cross section of vertical drain assisted preloading	4
Figure 2.1. Effect of sample thickness on the amount of primary consolidation for normally consolidated clay (after Jamiolkowski et al. 1985)	10
Figure 2.2. Definition of C_r , C_c and C'_c (after Mesri et al. 1994)	15
Figure 2.3. Consolidation stages due to one load increment	16
Figure 2.4. Pore water pressure versus time	18
Figure 2.5. Dynamic viscosity of water at 1atm as a function of temperature	19
Figure 2.6. Coefficient of secondary compression versus consolidation pressure at different temperatures for remoulded organic Paulding (after Mesri 1973)	20
Figure 2.7. Variation of the secondary compression index with the consolidation pressure for undisturbed Mexico City clay (after Mesri et al. 1975).....	21
Figure 2.8. Compression index versus consolidation pressure for undisturbed Mexico City clay (after Mesri et al. 1975)	23
Figure 2.9. (a) Void ratio versus time; (b) void ratio versus effective vertical stress (after Mesri and Castro 1987).....	24
Figure 2.10. Total and effective surcharge ratios definition (after Feng 1991).....	26
Figure 2.11. R'_s values in terms of $SpfSp_s$ and SSp_s , for $t'_s < t'_{ps}$ (after Feng 1991).....	27
Figure 2.12. Elapsed times definition used to estimate post-surcharge secondary compression (after Feng 1991)	30
Figure 2.13. Post-surcharge secondary compression index in terms of $Ca''Ca$ (after Mesri et al. 1994)	31
Figure 2.14. Ideal model of surcharging to reduce secondary compression (after Mesri et al. 1994)..	32
Figure 2.15. Relationship between void ratio and vertical effective stress throughout the consolidation process (after Taylor and Merchant 1940)	38
Figure 2.16. Effect of sustained loading on results of oedometer tests (aging effect) (after Bjerrum 1967)	41
Figure 2.17. Definition of instant and delayed compression compared with primary consolidation and secondary compression (after Bjerrum 1967)	42
Figure 2.18. Creep oedometer tests in Batiscan Clay (after Leroueil et al. 1985).....	48
Figure 2.19. Rheological models proposed by Barden: (a) Barden's proposed non-linear model, and (b) model solved by Barden (after Barden 1965) (Note: N and L stand for non-linear and linear, respectively)	52
Figure 2.20. Effect of drainage path on experimental compression curves (after Aboshi 1973)	54
Figure 2.21. Rajot's Rheological mechanical model (after Perrone 1998)	56
Figure 2.22. Perzyna's (1963) viscoplastic theory (after Perrone 1998).....	58
Figure 2.23. Olszak and Perzyna (1966) viscoplastic theory (after Perrone 1998)	59
Figure 2.24. Schematic diagram of embankment	62

Figure 2.25. Vertical drain installation patterns; (a) square pattern, (b) triangular pattern	64
Figure 2.26. Cross section of the disturbed zone surrounding a vertical drain, (a) two zones hypothesis, (b) three zones hypothesis	68
Figure 3.1. Schematic fitting curves for instant, reference, equivalent and limit time lines	88
Figure 3.2. One dimensional rod of length L	92
Figure 3.3. Region R and the mesh points (after Kharab and Guenther 2012).....	93
Figure 3.4. Schematic form of the Forward-difference method (after Kharab and Guenther 2012)	94
Figure 3.5. Schematic form of the Crank-Nicolson method (after Kharab and Guenther 2012).....	96
Figure 3.6. Schematic 3D-axisymmetric consolidation.....	97
Figure 3.7. (a) Location of finite difference nodes at any given time; (b) time steps.....	101
Figure 3.8. Boundary conditions for (a) soil layer surrounded by two permeable layers (drains) at the top and bottom; (b) soil layer surrounded by impervious layer at the bottom and highly permeable layer (drainage blanket) at the top	101
Figure 3.9. Flowchart of the developed MATLAB code	103
Figure 4.1. Large scale Rowe cell apparatus (a) schematic diagram of the cell and (b) locations of the pore pressure transducers at the base of the cell.....	108
Figure 4.2. A photographic view of the GDS pressure/volume controller device.....	109
Figure 4.3. Infinite volume controller instrument	109
Figure 4.4. Schematic diagram of Rowe cell set-up.....	110
Figure 4.5. Established setup in the laboratory (large Rowe cell).....	111
Figure 4.6. Grain size distribution curve for vertical drain sand	113
Figure 4.7. Pre-consolidation process prior to the oedometer test; (a) cylinder contacting reconstituted sample and (b) samples under pre-consolidation pressure	115
Figure 4.8. Preparing the samples for the oedometer test, (a) placing the oedometer ring, (b) cutting the extra top part, (c) cutting the extra bottom part, and (d) the final sample	116
Figure 4.9. Consolidation test, (a) placing the prepared sample and (b) oedometer apparatus connected to the data logger.....	116
Figure 4.10. Variation of permeability against void ratio (sample S1)	117
Figure 4.11. Variation of permeability against void ratio (sample S2)	117
Figure 4.12. Variation of permeability against void ratio (sample S3)	118
Figure 4.13. Schematic diagram of the small Rowe cell apparatus.....	119
Figure 4.14. Testing procedure, (a) filling the Rowe cell with soil sample and levelling the surface of sample, (b) placing the porous plate on top of the sample, (c) fixing the top cap, and (d) Applying a pressure to ensure full saturation	120
Figure 4.15. Established setup in the laboratory (small Rowe cell)	121
Figure 4.16. Consolidation test results on reconstituted sample S1 (loading).....	122
Figure 4.17. Excess pore water pressure measurement on reconstituted sample S1 (loading).....	123
Figure 4.18. Consolidation test results on reconstituted sample S1 (unloading).....	123
Figure 4.19. Excess pore water pressure measurement on reconstituted sample S1 (unloading).....	124
Figure 4.20. Consolidation test results on reconstituted sample S1 (reloading).....	124

Figure 4.21. Excess pore water pressure measurement on reconstituted sample S1 (reloading).....	125
Figure 4.22. Consolidation test results on reconstituted sample S3 (loading).....	125
Figure 4.23. Excess pore water pressure measurement on reconstituted sample S3 (loading).....	126
Figure 4.24. Consolidation test results on reconstituted sample S3 (unloading).....	126
Figure 4.25. Excess pore water pressure measurement on reconstituted sample S3 (unloading).....	127
Figure 4.26. Consolidation test results on reconstituted sample S3 (reloading).....	127
Figure 4.27. Excess pore water pressure measurement on reconstituted sample S3 (reloading).....	128
Figure 4.28. Variation of void ratio versus effective vertical stress (Sample S1)	129
Figure 4.29. Variation of void ratio versus effective vertical stress (Sample S3)	129
Figure 4.30. Comparison between predicted numerical creep strain and laboratory measurements at 800 kPa (sample S1).....	131
Figure 4.31. Comparison between predicted numerical creep strain and laboratory measurements at 800 kPa (sample S3).....	132
Figure 4.32. Changes of ψ_{0v} versus vertical effective stress for reconstituted sample S1	132
Figure 4.33. Changes of ψ_{0v} versus vertical effective stress for reconstituted sample S3	133
Figure 4.34. Time dependant stress-vertical strain relationship for reconstituted sample S1	133
Figure 4.35. Time dependant stress-vertical strain relationship for reconstituted sample S3	134
Figure 4.36. Variation of permeability against void ratio (sample S1)	135
Figure 4.37. Variation of permeability against void ratio (sample S3)	135
Figure 4.38. Comparison between predicted numerical settlements and laboratory measurements for small Rowe cell (sample S1).....	136
Figure 4.39. Comparison between predicted numerical settlements and laboratory measurements for small Rowe cell (sample S3).....	136
Figure 4.40. Placing of PVC and brass pipes as the reduced permeability zone boundary and the vertical drain border, (a) top view, (b) side view and (c) a typical cross section of the Rowe cell.....	138
Figure 4.41. Sample placement, (a) filling the intact area (intact zone) with the prepared soil and (b) the setup after placing PVC and Brass pipes as the reduced permeability zone boundary and vertical drain border	139
Figure 4.42. Rig set up, (a) geotextile filters, (b) pre-consolidation loading rings, (c) the first two loading rings with drainage grooves and holes, (d) placing of the first loading ring and (e) full loading condition	140
Figure 4.43. Testing procedures, (a) Pouring the vertical drain material and (b) Pulling out the outer pipe.....	141
Figure 4.44. Testing procedures, (a) pulling out the inner pipe and (b) cutting the extra part of the filter paper	141
Figure 4.45. Testing procedures, (a) levelling the top surface and (b) placing the geotextile on top surface	142
Figure 4.46. Testing procedures, (a) filling the cell with water and (b) placing the cell top	142

Figure 4.47. Schematic diagram of the de-airing process	143
Figure 4.48. Schematic diagram of the instrumentation plan, (a) the cross section of bottom of the Rowe cell and (b) plan view of the body of Rowe cell	146
Figure 4.49. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT B2	147
Figure 4.50. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT B3	147
Figure 4.51. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT B4	148
Figure 4.52. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT B5	148
Figure 4.53. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout unloading and reloading at PWPT B2	150
Figure 4.54. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout unloading and reloading at PWPT B3	150
Figure 4.55. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout unloading and reloading at PWPT B4	151
Figure 4.56. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout unloading and reloading at PWPT B5	151
Figure 4.57. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT A1	152
Figure 4.58. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT A2	153
Figure 4.59. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT A3	153
Figure 4.60. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time throughout loading at PWPT A4	154
Figure 4.61. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time at PWPT A1	155
Figure 4.62. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time at PWPT A2	155
Figure 4.63. Comparison of the excess pore water pressure predictions and laboratory measurement versus time at PWPT A3	156
Figure 4.64. Measured excess pore water pressure at transducers located on the bottom of the cell (loading)	156
Figure 4.65. Measured excess pore water pressure at transducers located on the bottom of the cell (unloading and reloading)	157
Figure 4.66. Measured excess pore water pressures from transducers located on the sides of the cell (loading)	157

Figure 4.67. Measured excess pore water pressures from transducers located on the sides of the cell (unloading and reloading)	158
Figure 4.68. Variations of excess pore water pressures with the vertical distance from the bottom of the impermeable boundary	159
Figure 4.69. Variations of excess pore water pressures with the radial distance from the centre of the drain	160
Figure 4.70. Predicted creep coefficient (ψ_v) values versus time	161
Figure 4.71. Creep strain limit values predictions versus time	161
Figure 4.72. Comparison between predicted numerical settlements and laboratory measurements (loading)	163
Figure 4.73. Comparison between predicted numerical settlements and laboratory measurements (unloading and reloading)	163
Figure 5.1. Väsby test field (after Chang 1981)	168
Figure 5.2. Soil profile beneath the Väsby test fill	169
Figure 5.3. Consolidation tests results on Väsby post glacial clay samples for vertical stresses between 5 kPa and 160 kPa	169
Figure 5.4. Time dependant stress-vertical strain relationship for Väsby post glacial clay	170
Figure 5.5. Changes of ψ_{0v} versus vertical effective stress	170
Figure 5.6. Permeability changes versus void ratio	171
Figure 5.7. Cross section of the disturbed zone surrounding a vertical drain, (a) two zones hypothesis, (b) three zones hypothesis	172
Figure 5.8. Variations of initial permeability profile for Cases A to F	174
Figure 5.9. Excess pore water pressure values predicted by developed code versus time for Cases A to F	175
Figure 5.10. Variations of excess pore water pressure with time for Case A	177
Figure 5.11. Variations of the excess pore water pressure values just before unloading ($t = 182$ days) for Cases A to F	177
Figure 5.12. Predicted creep coefficient (ψ_v) values versus time for Cases A to F	178
Figure 5.13. Creep strain limit values predicted by the developed code versus time for Cases A to F	179
Figure 5.14. Comparison of the settlement predictions for Cases A to F and the field measurements at the ground surface	180
Figure 5.15. Comparison between the settlement predictions for Cases A to F and the field measurements at 3.8 m depth	180
Figure 5.16. Comparison between post construction settlement prediction for Cases A to F and the field measurement at the ground surface	181
Figure 5.17. The required time to achieve 500 mm of settlement for Cases A to F at the ground surface	182
Figure 5.18. Variations of permeability profile versus time for Case A	182

Figure 5.19. Variations of permeability ratio with time in disturbed zone for Case A	183
Figure 5.20. Skå-Edeby test field (After Hansbo 1960)	185
Figure 5.21. Soil profile beneath the Skå-Edeby test fill.....	185
Figure 5.22. Initial void ratio profile versus depth	186
Figure 5.23. Preconsolidation pressure profile versus depth.....	186
Figure 5.24. Consolidation tests results on Skå-Edeby glacial clay samples for vertical stresses between 21.6 kPa and 338.3 kPa.....	187
Figure 5.25. Time dependant stress-vertical strain relationship for Skå-Edeby glacial clay	189
Figure 5.26. Changes of ψ_{0v} versus vertical effective stress.....	189
Figure 5.27. Permeability changes versus void ratio	190
Figure 5.28. Cross section of the disturbed and transition zones surrounding a vertical drain	191
Figure 5.29. Permeability profile in the disturbed and transition zones for all cases	193
Figure 5.30. Variations of overconsolidation ratio profile for Cases A to E at depth of 2.5m	193
Figure 5.31. Comparison of the developed code excess pore water pressure predictions for cases A to E and the field measurements at depth of 2.5m.....	195
Figure 5.32. Comparison of the developed code excess pore water pressure predictions for cases A to E and the field measurements at depth of 5m.....	195
Figure 5.33. Comparison of the developed code excess pore water pressure predictions for cases A to E and the field measurements at depth of 9m.....	196
Figure 5.34. Variations of excess pore water pressure with time for Case B	197
Figure 5.35. Variations of the excess pore water pressure values at the end of loading ($t = 62$ days) for Cases A to E	198
Figure 5.36. Predicted creep strain limit (ϵ_{climit}) values versus radial distance at the end of loading ($t = 62$ days) for Cases A to E	199
Figure 5.37. Predicted visco-plastic strain rate (g) values versus radial distance at the end of loading ($t = 62$ days) for Cases A to E	200
Figure 5.38. Predicted visco-plastic strain rate (g) values versus radial distance at 200 days for Cases A to E	201
Figure 5.39. Comparison of the settlement predictions for Cases A to E and the field measurements at the ground surface	201
Figure 5.40. Comparison of the settlement predictions for Cases A to E and the field measurements at 2.5m depth.....	203
Figure 5.41. Comparison between the settlement predictions for Cases A to E and the field measurements at 5m depth	204

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. Values of $C\alpha Cc$ for natural soil deposits (modified after Mesri & Godlewski, 1977).....	22
Table 2.2. A summary of the Hypothesis B models presented.....	60
Table 2.3. Conversion relationships suggested for a rectangular drain.....	63
Table 2.4. Proposed analytical solutions for vertical drain assisted preloading	78
Table 2.5. Summary of numerical studies conducted to simulate PVD assisted	81
Table 4.1. Properties of the adopted soil samples in this study	112
Table 4.2. Important sizes for vertical drain sand	113
Table 4.3. Mix design for the reconstituted samples	114
Table 4.4. Properties of the reconstituted samples	114
Table 4.5. Permeability of mixtures (Surcharge = 20 kPa)	118
Table 4.6. Properties of the intact zone, the reduced permeability zone, and drain	118
Table 4.7. Details of loading stages using small Rowe cell (Sample S1).....	121
Table 4.8. Details of loading stages using small Rowe cell (Sample S3).....	122
Table 4.9. The calculated values of ψ_{0v} and ϵ_{rlimit} at different vertical effective stress for intact zone (Sample S1)	130
Table 4.10. The calculated values of ψ_{0v} and ϵ_{rlimit} at different vertical effective stress for intact zone (Sample S3)	131
Table 4.11. Elastic visco-plastic model parameters for soil samples S1 and S3	134
Table 4.12. Details of consolidation loading stages	144
Table 5.1. Adopted soil properties for Väsby post glacial clay.....	171
Table 5.2. Various available permeability variation equations	173
Table 5.3. Fitting parameters for disturbed zone permeability profile for Cases A-F	173
Table 5.4. Adopted soil properties for Skå-Edeby glacial clay	188
Table 5.6. Fitting parameters for disturbed zone overconsolidation ratio profile for Cases A to E ...	194

LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	experimental constant
a	the compressibility of the linear spring
a_v	constant over load increment for small void ratio changes
B	experimental constant
b	the compressibility of the spring
C	experimental constant
C_α	secondary compression index
C'_α	post-surge secondary compression index
C''_α	post-surge secant secondary compression index
$C_{\alpha e}$	the rate of secondary compression
C_c	conventional compression index
C_r	conventional recompression index (unloading and reloading data)
c_k	permeability change index
c_v	coefficient of consolidation
D	experimental constant
e_0	initial void ratio
e_1	the initial value of void ratio
e_{ref}	void ratio at effective stress equal to σ'_z on reference time line
e_z	void ratio for a particular applied effective stress σ'_z
e_{EOP}	void ratio when the excess pore water pressure has fully dissipated
g	visco-plastic settlement rate
H	layer depth
h	hydraulic head (static pressure head)
i	horizontal node coordinator
j	vertical node coordinator
k_0	initial permeability
k_1	vacuum pressure reduction factor by depth
k_2	vacuum pressure reduction factor by radius
k_{ave}^A	average disturbed zone permeability for Case A
k_{ave}^B	average disturbed zone permeability for Case B
k_{ave}^C	average disturbed zone permeability for Case C
k_{ave}^D	average disturbed zone permeability for Case D
k_{ave}^E	average disturbed zone permeability for Case E
k_{ave}^F	average disturbed zone permeability for Case F
$k'_r(r)$	coefficients of permeability for horizontal direction for disturbed zone
$k'_z(r)$	coefficients of permeability for vertical direction for disturbed zone

k_d	the effect of both work hardening and strain rate hardening
k_r	coefficients of permeability for horizontal direction for intact zone
k_{si}	the horizontal coefficient of permeability of remoulded soil
k_z	coefficients of permeability for vertical direction for intact zone
l	total depth
m_v	coefficient of volume compressibility
n	model parameter
OCR	overconsolidation ratio
p_0	the applied vacuum pressure
Q	The flow in the slice at a distance r
q_0	the constant loading
R	disturbed zone radius
R'_s	effective surcharge ratio
r	radial coordinate
r_d	disturbed zone radius
r_e	the equivalent influence radius
r_p	partial disturbed zone radius
r_s	smear zone radius
r_w	vertical drain zone radius
S_p	drain spacing
S_t	average total settlement
S_u	shear strength for disturbed and transition zones
$(S_u)_{NC}$	normally consolidated shear strength of soil
T_h	horizontal time factor
t_0	curve-fitting parameter related to the choice of reference time line
t_e	equivalent time
t_l	the time that post-surcharge secondary compression reappears after the removal of the surcharge
t_p	the time required for completion of the primary consolidation
t_{pr}	the time required for completion of the post-surcharge primary consolidation
t'_{ps}	time to EOP compression under surcharge
t'_s	the surcharging time
t_{total}	maximum calculation time
U	The degree of consolidation
\bar{U}_h	the average degree of consolidation for axisymmetric flow
u	excess pore water pressure
\bar{u}_i	the average pore water pressure
u_{ni}	pore water pressure at any point in the natural soil zone

u_{si}	pore water pressure at any point in the smear zone
u_{vac}	vacuum pressure at any point
u_{wi}	the excess pore water pressure within vertical drain
z	vertical coordinate

Greek symbols

α	permeability ratio parameter
α_p	the instant deformation per unit thickness and unit load
α_s	secondary compression rate per unit thickness and unit load
β_1	permeability ratio parameter
β_2	permeability ratio parameter
γ_{sat}	saturated unit weight of soil
γ_w	unit weight of water
$(\Delta e)_p$	the change in the void ratio during the primary consolidation
Δr	radial distance increment
Δt	time step
Δz	vertical distance increment
$\Delta \sigma_{vs}$	the total surcharge pressure
$\dot{\epsilon}^e$	elastic compression
$\dot{\epsilon}^p$	time dependant compression
ϵ_z	soil vertical strain
ϵ_z^e	vertical strain at stress level σ'_z
ϵ_{z0}^e	vertical strain at $\sigma'_z = \sigma'_u$
ϵ_z^{ep}	reference time line strain
ϵ_{z0}^{ep}	vertical strain at $\sigma'_z = \sigma'_{z0}$
ϵ_{cr}^{limit}	creep strain limit
ϵ_z^{limit}	strain limit
$\dot{\epsilon}_{ij}^{vp}$	the visco-plastic strain rate
ϵ_z^{vp}	creep compression strain
θ	the temperature
Λ	time-dependent multiplier
$\frac{\kappa}{v}$	material parameter describing the elastic stiffness of the soil
$\frac{\lambda}{v}$	material property describing the elastic-plastic stiffness of the soil
v	specific volume ($1 + e$)
$\bar{\sigma}'$	average effective stress
σ'_u	unit stress
σ'_{z0}	material property
σ'_{vf}	the final effective vertical stress after the removal of surcharge

σ'_{vs}	the maximum vertical effective stress reached immediately before removal of the surcharge
ς	the viscosity of the dashpot
τ	the non-linear viscous resistance of the dashpot
Υ	fluidity parameter
ϕ	viscous nucleus
$\frac{\psi_0}{v}$	initial creep coefficient